

licensed merchandise, multiple animated series (1967 – 52 episodes & 1994 - 65 episodes), numerous DVD's, live action movies: Spider-Man(2002) and Spider-Man 2 (2004) debuting as the 5th and 7th grossing films of all time upon their respective release; there really is not much to argue about. 'Nuff Said.'

Without further ado, let me introduce you, via our interview, to The Exemplar of Literary Wit, The Bard of the Heroes, The Amazing Stan Lee -

**U.** Well thanks again for taking the time. I really appreciate it.

**SL:** You should be grateful, (joking) you certainly should!

**U.** Stan, tell me what was it that was the first spark that made you want to create?

**SL:** When I was a little kid, about six years old, I used to tell myself stories, I remember, I used to take a sheet of paper and I would draw a horizontal line on the bottom of the page and that was my horizon, that was the street, and then I would draw little stick figures and characters standing on the line doing little things, running around, chasing each other, fighting, whatever, and I made up little stories for myself, I enjoyed doing that. I stopped after a while, you can only draw stick figures for so long.

**U.** Tell me about your interest in acting when you were a teenager.

**SL:** I think it started when I saw Errol Flynn playing Robin Hood and Capt. Blood. I wanted to be Errol Flynn, oh I wanted to be an actor, and I wanted to be a hero. I used to leave the theatre, you know, I was about 11, 12 years old, and I'd have a little crooked smile on my face like I thought how he smiled and I'd have an imaginary sword at my hip and I was hoping I'd find some bully bothering a little girl so I could go and defend her. Errol Flynn and his movies really affected me.

**U.** I read somewhere you joined an acting club?

**SL:** I belonged to something called the WPA Federal Theatre. Orson Wells was a member, a lot of big people were in there, but it didn't pay anything. This is when I was in my late teens, and I was able to make more money writing, so I gave it up. I'm a frustrated actor and that's why I left it, but I love to lecture at a college. I don't have time for it now, but I used to love it because it's the closest thing you can come to acting – you're on stage, you have a captive audience and you let yourself go.

**U.** What made you go and enlist for World War Two? Was that part of wanting to

be a hero? Or was it more of wanting to do the right thing?

**SL:** No, no, I don't think I thought of myself as a hero but we were at war and WWII was a very serious undertaking (laughs) I just felt it was my duty to enlist. They put me in the signal core and it was to be my job, they trained me to climb telegraph poles and I was to be one of the people that goes ahead of the troops overseas and make sure the wires were up so they could communicate with each other which, (laughs) was a pretty dangerous job, but what the hell. And then just a little while before I was supposed to ship out, my orders were changed. They found out I had been writing stories for comic books and they needed a writer in their film division in Astoria, New York. So I was transferred there to write training films and training manuals. And I spent the rest of the war doing that. Which, in a way was great, but in a way never gave me the chance to be a hero. I kind of resent that.

**U.** Well, I think you became a hero to many people through your writing.

**U.** What would you say is the greatest moment in your career?

**SL:** Maybe getting married (laughs)

**U.** Tell me about your wife who traveled the vicissitudes of life with you for so many years.

**SL:** She's the greatest and you know, when I was a kid, I used to draw pictures of girls, it's what every guy did and wanted to draw, and there was one face I always drew; big eyes, lovely lips, nice teeth, turned up nose and when I met my wife – she was the face I had always drawn, so I figured it was fate. Funny story about that – she had been an actress and she's far more talented than I am – sings, dances and I am not kidding you, she could have been a great singer/dancer/actress, but in those days, guys tried to be very macho and I said to her "No wife of mine is going to work!" (laughs) and she said, "OK!" and it was the biggest mistake I ever made. She could have been supporting me for the rest of our lives.

**U.** Sounds like she was a great support throughout your career, though. What would you say was the lowest point in your career?

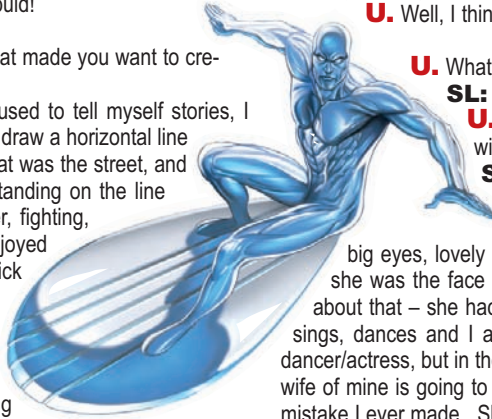
**SL:** Well, there are three of them. One, no two of them are when my publisher decided to suspend publication for a while because things were bad and I had to fire the staff who were all friends of mine. He went to Miami and he said, "Stan, I'm going to Miami, I want you to fire the staff." And the other point was when I had started a company called "Stan Lee Media" and I don't know, something went wrong. I wasn't at the business end of it. The guy who was in charge of the business end, I still don't know exactly what happened, but they investigated, the FCC came in, we had to go out of business, we went bankrupt, there was something going on that wasn't right and that was really terrible because again, we had over 100 people working for us and they all had to be let go.

**U.** I know this will be hard for you since you've created so many, but which is your favorite character?

**SL:** This will be hard to answer too, because it used to be whichever one I was writing at the time. I guess I would have to say "Spider-Man" because he's the most popular, the best known in the world. I also love "The Thing" and "The Silver Surfer", in fact if I start talking about them, well.... I loved Dr. Strange, Thor -- I loved them all. You now, I'm my biggest fan (laughs) I love the things I wrote.

**U.** Let's talk about Hulk – who decided to make him green versus grey?

**SL:** That's a funny thing. I knew kids loved costumes on their superheroes, so I decided to make him grey because I couldn't think of any way to have a big monster to put a costume on but he had to look different in some way, so I figured I'd color his skin grey, because that was kind of a spooky looking, dramatic, scary color. But when the first issue came out the printer had had a problem, and on one page he was grey and another he was dark grey and another he came out black and on one page he almost looked white and they couldn't get the color consistent. So I figured the hell with that and when you're a comic book editor you're like God, you can do anything you want, so I said "Make him green in the next issue." That was a color nobody was using at the time and it was as arbitrary as that. I could have said make him blue or purple or orange. "Make him green". It turned out good because I love little mottos and sayings and then I was able to call him the "Jolly Green Giant", "The Green Goliath" and all these corny little things I made up.



The Evil Dr. Doom

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